



# WHIP

## Bog Turtle Habitat Management

### WHIP is the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

The purpose of this category of WHIP is to enhance, or maintain habitat for the federally threatened bog turtle. NRCS works closely with the NJ DEP, Division of Fish and Wildlife's Endangered and Nongame Species Program (ENSP) on bog turtle projects. ENSP biologists will determine if sites have bog turtle populations and are suitable for habitat enhancement projects. These projects usually include control of undesirable vegetation such as dense woody vegetation or invasive exotic plants which degrade bog turtle habitat.

**Cost-share info:** 75% of the actual cost of implementing bog turtle habitat enhancement or maintenance projects can be provided to landowners.

**Requirements:** An existing population of bog turtles must be present at the site or on immediately adjacent lands in order to be eligible. ENSP biologists will determine site eligibility from existing bog turtle database information or by conducting an on-site survey for bog turtles.

**Length of the project:** Plans will be developed for a five- year to ten-year period. All practices must be maintained for the length of the plan.

**How to apply:** Contact your local NRCS Service Center for an application. See reverse side for locations.

#### Cost-share is available for:

- Brush management for woody plant removal
- Control of invasive exotic weed populations
- Biological control of purple loosestrife
- Fencing for prescribed grazing
- Water level management
- Water quality protection

#### Cost-share is NOT authorized for:

- Roads, buildings, boardwalks, platforms, blinds or structures not directly related to habitat management



NJ DEP Division of Fish & Wildlife photo

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# WHIP Bog Turtle Projects in New Jersey

Bog turtles naturally occur in open sedge meadows that have a small, but reliable flow of water all year long. The shallow “rivulets” of water, flowing through the clumps of “sedgey” vegetation create ideal habitat. These habitats usually have water depths of less than 4” and mucky bottoms. The secretive turtles spend much of their time submerged in the muck or hidden under dense, herbaceous vegetation. Bog turtles bask in sunlight on warm, sunny mornings and need to lay eggs on sedge hummocks that receive direct sunlight for incubation. The majority of New Jersey’s remaining bog turtle populations exist in agricultural areas where livestock currently graze or have recently grazed. Grazing helps maintain the open herbaceous wetland conditions required by bog turtles. If grazing is removed, the open habitat is gradually replaced



Above— densely shaded habitat before woody plant removal

by trees and shrubs, and due to loss of sunlight, bog turtles move out of these areas. WHIP plans have centered on maintaining the open sedge meadows. Plans have included removal of woody vegetation, mechanically and /or with chemical controls. Some areas have been fenced with WHIP cost share assistance to help implement prescribed grazing of bog turtle wetlands by sheep, goats or cattle. Invasive wetland plants such as phragmites and purple loosestrife have been controlled with mechanical control, chemical control and biological controls in the case of purple loosestrife. WHIP funding has helped the NJ Department of Agriculture’s Beneficial Insect Lab release purple loosestrife leaf-eating beetles for effective biological control and enhancement of bog turtle habitat. Most of the bog turtle habitat work in New Jersey has been done by ENSP staff on private and state lands.

## NRCS Service Centers

**Freehold- (732)462-1079X3**

Serving Mercer, Middlesex & Monmouth

**Frenchtown-(908)782-4614X3**

Serving Hunterdon, Somerset, & Union

**Hackettstown-(908)852-2576 X3**

Serving Sussex, Warren & Morris

**Hainesport-(609)267-0811 X3**

Serving Burlington, Camden, & Ocean

**Vineland-(856)205-1225X3**

Serving Atlantic, Cape May, & Cumberland

**Woodstown-((856)769-1126X3**

Serving Gloucester & Salem

**Morris Plains-(973)538-1552**

Serving Bergen, Hudson, Essex, Passaic, Morris  
& Union



Above— bog turtle habitat after tree and shrub removal to allow full sunlight to reach the wetland floor